

Budget Press Conference

1:30 p.m., January 28, 2004

Governor's Mansion

Talking Points

Legislative Cooperation

In keeping with this Administration's desire to have an open and honest relationship with the Legislature, the members of the House and Senate Budget Committees joined me for lunch today and received an in-depth briefing on my Executive Budget. I appreciate them taking some additional time to join us for this public announcement.

Cutting the Deficit in Half (Chart #1)

The most important step toward fixing our budget problem is to first acknowledge what it actually is. As you can see here, Mississippi's budget hole is as large as we expected - over \$700 million. However, with better management, I believe my Administration will cut that budget deficit in half - to \$356 million. *(Circle the reduction on the chart)*

Campaign Priorities (Chart #2)

The areas of government that I am recommending receive increases over what the LBC recommended are priority issues that I talked about during my campaign - creating more and better jobs *(MDA)*, using our universities more in economic development *(IHL)*, enhancing workforce development *(IHL/CC)*, supporting

stronger drug enforcement and keeping taxes down (*Homestead Exemption*).

Operation: Streamline (Chart #3)

It would have been easy just to accept the LBC recommendation and lay low while others suggested belt-tightening measures – but that’s not leadership. I want my Administration to be an example to the rest of state government on how to run more efficiently.

Not only are we announcing our Executive Budget today, but we are also announcing the beginning of *Operation: Streamline*. *Operation: Streamline* is a comprehensive efficiency plan that outlines several areas of government where we believe we can, indeed, do better.

Some of it will require help from the Legislature, some will not. But all of it will demonstrate that better management alone can save money without negatively affecting our citizens.

Our goal is to save \$283 million into 2005. Our hope is that this will just be the beginning in what will be a smarter way to run state government. The business world has rapidly learned how to operate more efficiently. It is time for state government to do the same.